

**Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)
Final Performance Report**

The final performance report summarizes the outcome of your FMPP award objectives. As stated in the FMPP Terms and Conditions, you will not be eligible for future FMPP or Local Food Promotion Program grant funding unless all close-out procedures are completed, including satisfactory submission of this final performance report.

This final report will be made available to the public once it is approved by FMPP staff. Write the report in a way that promotes your project's accomplishments, as this document will serve as not only a learning tool, but a promotional tool to support local and regional food programs. Particularly, recipients are expected to provide both qualitative and quantitative results to convey the activities and accomplishments of the work.

The report is limited to 10 pages and is due **within 90 days** of the project's performance period end date, or sooner if the project is complete. Provide answers to each question, or answer "not applicable" where necessary. It is recommended that you email or fax your completed performance report to FMPP staff to avoid delays:

FMPP Phone: 202-690-4152; Email: USDAFMPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov; Fax: 202-690-4152

Should you need to mail your documents via hard copy, contact FMPP staff to obtain mailing instructions.

Report Date Range: (e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)	September 30, 2014 – March 31, 2017
Authorized Representative Name:	Sarah Sullivan
Authorized Representative Phone:	541-490-6420
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Recipient Organization Name:	Gorge Grown Food Network
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Growing Rural Farmers Markets: Feeding Local Economies
Grant Agreement Number: (e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)	14-FMPP-OR-0142
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Hood River, OR
Total Awarded Budget:	\$66,022

FMPP staff may contact you to follow up for long-term success stories. Who may we contact?

☒ Same Authorized Representative listed above (check if applicable).

☐ Different individual: Name: _____; Email: _____; Phone: _____

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1. State the goals/objectives of your project as outlined in the grant narrative and/or approved by FMPP staff.

i. Goal/Objective 1: Increase the viability and sustainability of rural farmers' markets in our region.

a. Progress Made: Gorge Grown Food Network (GGFN) partnered with Hood River News to produce a bi-annual publication highlighting local food and farmers markets called "Savor the Gorge". This new publication contains the "Who's Your Farmer" buying guide. 13,000 copies are distributed twice a year. GGFN also promoted farmers markets and local food through The Gorge Magazine (75,000 copies distributed twice/year), The Hood River Chamber, instagram and facebook. The website www.gorgegrown.com was updated to provide better information to the public about farmers markets. Rack cards and punch cards were printed to promote all farmers markets in the region. Seasonal eating guides and recipe cards were developed and distributed region wide at events, online, and in print media. Based on surveys showing public demand, GGFN extended the Hood River Farmers Market through the winter of 2016 to provide the first year round market in the Gorge, which was a great success.

b. Impact on Community: Six farmers markets in our region started a youth POP (Power of Produce) incentive program for youth to purchase fresh produce. All markets have been able to increase their capacity to host special events for customers. The new winter farmers market has provided farmers with a year round venue to sell produce, and customers with more access to fresh food. Overall, 85% of Gorge farmers markets reported an increase in attendance and gross sales from 2014 to 2016. 60% of Gorge markets experienced an increase in weekly average vendor attendance.

ii. Goal/Objective 2: Build the leadership and organizational capacity of regional farmers market managers.

a. Progress Made: Market managers in the Rural Farmers Market Network (RFMN) met quarterly to share best practices, support each other, build capacity and coordinate regional promotion. Market managers also collaborated to increase promotion of programs for low-income shoppers and youth incentive programs. Materials were developed and distributed including vendor application templates, market guidelines, vendor currency guides, and POP materials for youth. Together, Gorge market managers have been able to streamline data collection including vendor sales, customer attendance and SNAP sales.

Since 2014, 8 representatives from Gorge markets have been able to attend the annual WSFMA Conference and 6 representatives attended the OSU Small Farms Conference (farmers market manager track). Market managers who attended the conferences reported an increase in knowledge and confidence in managing markets, and several implemented programs or tactics they learned such as increasing sponsorship, leveraging social media to increase attendance at markets, and offering incentives like SNAP Match and POP.

Representatives from 47 rural farmers' market management teams in the Pacific Northwest attended the Rural Farmers' Market Conference funded by this grant, held in collaboration with the Oregon Farmers Market Association and Oregon State University. The conference was a great success, and covered topics such as: budgeting for small farmers markets, building strong leadership teams, coordinating special events, affordable market promotion, and building relationships with community partners. Attendants reported plans to implement new strategies such as improving the structure of market committees and boards to bolster leadership, improving overall marketing, and developing budgets.

b. Impact on Community:

- Improved market management practices and organizational stability statewide;
- Increased market participation in OFMA, WSFMA and state conferences;
- Bolstered partnerships with county extension, health departments, WIC, business sponsors and others to bolster markets;
- The Gorge RFMN now serves as a unique model of how farmers' markets in rural regions can unite, co-promote markets, reduce competition, and share best practices;
- GGFN was invited to serve as the "regional lead" for the Washington State Farmers Market Association, providing the Washington side of the Gorge with additional resources and staff time to support markets.

iii. **Goal/Objective 3: Lower barriers to rural farmers' market promotion opportunities through collaboration.**

a. Progress Made: Power of Produce (POP) Program: The 1st trial of this program at Odell Mercado de Valle in 2015 was a great success. The \$2 tokens for fresh produce for youth caught on quickly, and soon up to 80 kids were frequenting the small, rural, mid-valley market (with parents and friends in tow) to "buy" their fresh fruits and veggies. In 2016, the POP program was then rolled out at the Hood River Market, Mosier Farmers Market, The Dalles Farmers Markets and White Salmon Farmers Market. The Dalles Farmers Market was able to successfully raise funds for the POP club from the city and local businesses with support of GGFN and POP promotional materials. In 2017, Stevenson Farmers Markets will be the 6th farmers market in the Gorge to implement a POP program.

Since 2014, SNAP sales at farmers markets in the Gorge have increased by 51%. In 2015, four farmers markets offered SNAP Match. In 2017, Goldendale Farmers Market will be the 6th market to implement a SNAP Match Program. All farmers markets accept WIC and SFDNP Vouchers. The Rural Farmers Market Network has been able to collectively promote programs for low-income shoppers through bilingual rackcards, signage at market, newspaper ads, posters and flyers. These materials have been distributed to social service

providers, Food Security Coalition (35+ partners), the Columbia Gorge Health Council, and several key listserves.

b. Impact on Community:

Market growth: Overall sales increased by about 9.5% (\$48,105) at the main 7 Gorge Farmers Markets. Customer attendances increased by 12% from 2014 – 2015. Mt. Hood Town Halls (monthly market) started in 2016 to serve the upper valley.

2. Overall Impact

GGFN has been tracking sales data of each vendor at regional farmers market for 11 years. Market managers enter data weekly into an excel spreadsheet, and at the end of the market season they share the data with vendors and the Farmers Market Advisory Committee. (Sales data is aggregated for public presentations to preserve vendors' privacy.)

- i. Number of direct jobs created: ~2.0 FTE (part-time market managers)
- ii. Number of jobs retained: 6 (market staff)
- iii. Number of indirect jobs created: Unknown.
- iv. Number of markets expanded: 7 increased programming and sales
- v. Number of new markets established: 3
- vi. Market sales increased by \$57,946 and increased by 12%. (from fall 2014 – March 2017)
- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: ~2000

Note: it was difficult to track how many businesses retained or hired new employees as a result of market growth and new markets. Several new businesses formed as a result of their success at farmers markets including Columbia Mushroom Company, Stepping Stone Farm, Nashi Ramen, Vitalina Rodriguez' (new Latino vendor) and The De La Torres (new Latino vendor). Saur Farming hired their first employee as a result of market growth.

3. Did you expand your customer base by reaching new populations such as new ethnic groups, additional low income/low access populations, new businesses, etc.?

- i. Regional farmers markets have increased bilingual marketing and market materials to engage our Latino community members. By working with WIC to hold market tours, and distribute WIC vouchers at markets, markets did see an increase in low-income mothers frequenting markets. Radio Tierra, the local Latino-run radio station, promoted markets in Spanish which helped increase attendance of Latino residents. By offering direct market training workshops in Spanish with the Small Business Development Center, GGFN was able to engage Latino business owners. By including tribal fishermen in market training, and recruiting the director of fish marketing for the Columbia River Intertribal Fisheries Commission to the GGFN board of directors, there has been an increase in market attendance among native populations, and market customers have enjoyed buying native-caught salmon from new vendors. Lastly, by promoting markets through the low-income housing authority, market promotional materials were distributed to over 1,000 low-income families.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

i. Who are your community partners?

Gorge Grown Food Network serves as the backbone agency for the Local Food Security Coalition, a group of 35+ organizations that have come together to identify gaps and better align efforts to bolster our local food system. The Coalition includes farmers, government agencies (WIC, SNAP, TANF), medical providers, grocers, gleaners, all regional hospital, Oregon Food Bank, Oregon State University Extension Office, Veggie Rx recipients, tribal leaders, Community Health Workers, schools, and local business owners. These partners help promote farmers markets, food access programs, and determine which sites are best for mobile markets (i.e. tribal reservations and low-income housing centers). The Coalition meets quarterly, and working committees meet every other month.

Oregon State University's Hood River and Wasco Extension services work with GGFN to execute cooking demonstrations at markets, especially for priority populations like WIC and Veggie Rx recipients who are low-income/food insecure.

Hood River County Health department attends Gorge Grown Farmers Markets to hand out WIC and FSNP vouchers to clients. On those market days, OSU facilitates cooking demos and bilingual SNAP educators share easy-to-follow and affordable recipes with local ingredients.

Starting in 2016, Goldendale Farmers Market partnered with their local 4H chapter to pair interested youth with farmers or successful home gardeners as a vendor incubator program. The youth were able to then grow and sell their produce at the farmers market community table.

Klickitat County Health Department is now supporting the White Salmon Farmers Market with paid staff time to staff the information booth, organize vendors, facilitate activities for youth, and promote the markets.

ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the FMPP project?

These partners help lower barriers to farmers markets, increase food literacy, increase visibility of farmers markets, increase food literacy, bolster inclusivity and much more. The result is an increase in consumption and sales of local food.

iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this FMPP grant?

Through increased communication and coordination of member organizations and agencies, and comprehensive inventorying of the local food system, the Food Security Coalition will continue to identify and fill gaps in the food system. The outcomes of this initiative will include a comprehensive, regional response to local food access, farm, and nutrition issues.

The Rural Farmers Market Network will continue to meet twice/year, and GGFN will offer one-on-one consultation with market managers as needed on an ongoing basis.

The Regional Lead for WSFMA (GGFN Hood River Market Manager) will attend a bi-annual farmers market conference and participate in monthly food access calls to share best practices and troubleshoot challenges. This will enable her to support all Gorge markets, and apply lessons learned from markets all over the Pacific Northwest locally.

5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the FMPP project?

We have staffed this FMPP project internally for the most part. We did contract with a conference organizer for the Rural Farmers Market Network through the Oregon Farmers Market Association. This really worked well to bridge communication between organizations, and ensure that market managers statewide could benefit from the conference.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?*

- i. Yes, we have shared results of this project via our newsletter (3,500), the Food Security Coalition, the Rural Farmers Market Network, the Oregon Farmers Market Association, and the Washington State Farmers Market Association. There were also several articles in local newspapers and magazines highlighting the POP (power of produce program) and farmers market activities.

7. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work?

- i. Feedback was collected during farmers market advisory committee meetings, farmer listening sessions, public “community conversations” and online surveys. Each year market managers survey market vendors and collect farmers market customer feedback via dot surveys. Market vendors can also submit anonymous feedback via written forms to market managers.
- ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?
 - a. 50% of market managers said that Veggie Rx attracted new market customers;
 - b. A dot survey conducted at Hood River Farmers Market showed overwhelming interest in a winter farmers market; vendors then agreed to participate in the 1st winter market in 2016 which was a great success;
 - c. When vendors were surveyed re: expanding the winter market from once a month to every other week for the 2017 season, the majority of them voted for more frequent markets; the result will be a winter market twice/month from December – April;
 - d. 66% of vendors say the 2016 HRFM was a good or excellent financial benefit to their business vs. 26% in 2015;
 - e. Veggie Rx recipients indicated that they were unclear of which booths to use vouchers at and that the farmers market could be intimidating; this resulted in the creation of better signage Gorge-wide highlighting which vendors accept Veggie Rx and other vouchers like WIC. OSU volunteers also started market tours which helps newcomers feel more welcome.

8. Budget Summary:

- i. As part of the FMPP closeout procedures, you are required to submit the SF-425 (Final Federal Financial Report). Check here if you have completed the SF-425 and are submitting it with this report: ☒
- ii. Did the project generate any income? No.

9. Lessons Learned:

- i. **Summarize any lessons learned.** They should draw on positive experiences (e.g. good ideas that improved project efficiency or saved money) and negative experiences (e.g. what did not go well and what needs to be changed).

GGFN was forced to move the Hood River Farmers Market for the 2016 season. Additionally, cornerstone vegetable vendors transitioned away from the farmers market into wholesale and CSA markets that same year. Although overall sales in specialty crops went down after the market move in 2016, sales for the remaining fruit/vegetable vendors at this market did increase. Cooking demonstrations and “iron chef” events were well attended, and consumers expressed interest in more events at markets. Direct market training for farmers were a great success, especially in Spanish for socially-disadvantaged, Latino farmers and entrepreneurs.

The new Veggie Prescription (Rx) Program, though not funded by this FMPP grant, has been the region’s most successful food access program to date. It provides food insecure residents with vouchers for fresh fruits and vegetables from healthcare providers or social service agencies like the health department or senior centers. Over 6,000 food insecure residents received vouchers during the 8-month pilot phase of the project. Several clinics, hospitals, and the Coordinated Care Organization (CCO) are now allocating funding for Veggie Rx for their patients, which will continue to drive more business to farmers markets.

- ii. **If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:**

We exceed all of our goals except for one: to increase the average number of vendors selling at all regional farmers markets by an average of 20%. While most of the markets did increase the number of vendors, some of the very rural markets still struggle to recruit and maintain vendors (i.e. Odell Mercado del Valle and Sherman County Farmers Markets). In these towns with very low populations, it’s difficult for vendors to justify the staff time it takes to man a market booth when more promising sales channels might include restaurants, wholesale, or CSA’s. Time will tell if these very small markets in isolated areas are viable, or if something like a mobile market might be a better solution.

- iii. **Describe any lessons learned in the administration of the project that might be helpful for others who would want to implement a similar project:**

Sometimes, market vendors feel uncomfortable sharing their gross sales info with market staff. Gorge Grown staff developed an anonymous sales data collection system to gather accurate vendor sales by category (i.e. vegetables, value added products, meat).

The autumn “Fill Your Pantry” bulk buying event has been very successful since its start in 2015. Market managers have successfully encouraged vendors at summer markets to offer price breaks for bulk buyers in response to customer feedback from the Fill Your Pantry Market.

10. Future Work:

- i. How will you continue the work of this project beyond the performance period? In other words, how will you parlay the results of your project’s work to benefit future community goals and initiatives? Include information about community impact and outreach, anticipated increases in markets and/or sales, estimated number of jobs retained/created, and any other information you’d like to share about the future of your project.

Buy Local Campaign: In 2017 we are promoting a “Buy Local” campaign with posters, market events, cooking demonstrations and a social media plan. Our goal is to continue to bolster farmers market sales.

Mobile Markets for low-income residents: We know that some Veggie Rx recipients cannot “redeem” their vouchers because they live in “food deserts,” miles away from markets. They may not have transportation to access fresh fruits and vegetables even if they have the means to “purchase” produce through Veggie Rx or SNAP match: About 30% of Veggie Rx Vouchers distributed go unused. By delivering produce to them with a mobile market, we hope to see the redemption rates of Veggie Rx increase and mobile markets thrive.

- ii. Do you have any recommendations for future activities and, if applicable, an outline of next steps or additional research that might advance the project goals?

Other long-term plans include:

- Securing the capital and space to establish a year-round market and business incubator space;
- Partnering with the Small Business Development Center to hold more direct-marketing workshops for Latino entrepreneurs to increase vendor diversity and inclusivity;
- Establishing a partnership with “Travel Oregon”, the statewide tourism commission to promote Gorge Farmers Markets;
- Expanding the Veggie Rx program with healthcare funding to increase access to local food for low-income residents;
- Expanding mobile market routes.